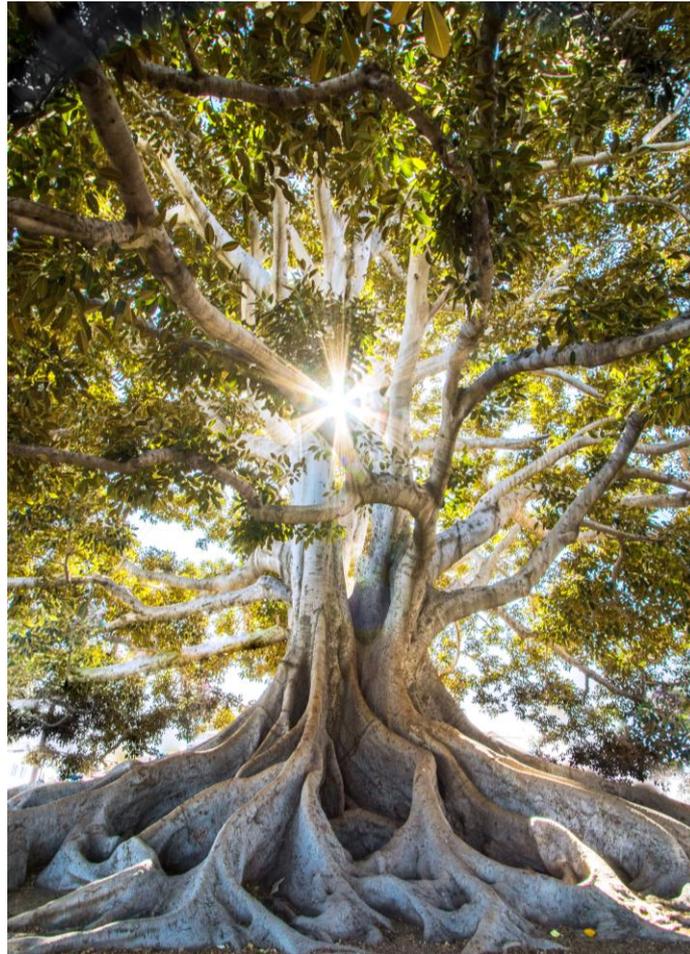


Persistent Pain Information Session

Resource Booklet



Chelsea and Westminster Hospital

Pain Therapies Team



Welcome

Welcome to this short introduction to persistent pain management and to the therapies team here at the Pain Clinic, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Over the course of this session we aim to share with you our knowledge about persistent pain; how it differs from short-term pain; and, most importantly, how you might go about living a valued life even in the presence of continued pain.

Why have I been referred?

Everybody in this session has been directed here either by one of our pain consultants; or by another pain specialist because they experience a persistent pain problem that is negatively affecting their life.

What can I expect?

The session is approximately ninety minutes long with a short break during which we encourage you to move around and change position.

You are encouraged to participate at times during the session but are under no pressure to do so. Should you wish to simply attend and absorb information then this is absolutely fine.

The talk will be delivered by a specialist pain physiotherapist and a clinical psychologist who at this stage do not know your individual circumstances. They will tell you how you go about booking into an assessment subsequent to this session where this can be discussed.

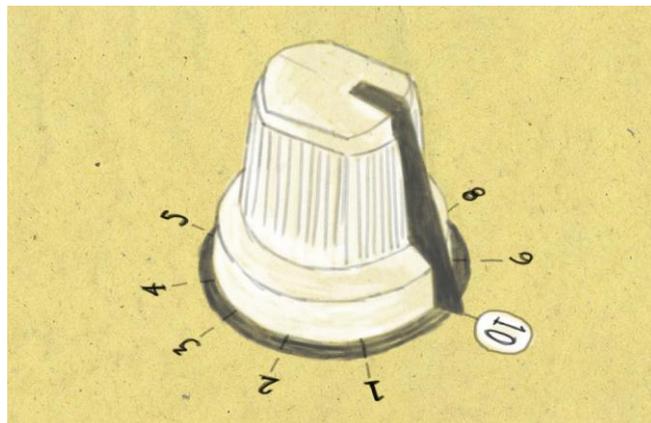
This handout is yours to keep so please feel free to make notes.

Understanding Persistent Pain – the role of the nervous system

Scientists and clinicians no longer consider pain to be directly linked to the level of damage in the tissues of the body. There's much more to it than that. There are two types of pain: acute pain and persistent pain (also known as chronic).

Acute pain is short-term, helpful and protective. For example, if you sprain your ankle it is likely you will feel pain associated with the bruising and swelling (inflammation). Usually it will settle as your body heals because the affected part no longer needs protecting. Healing usually takes less than three months, even for serious injuries.

Persistent pain, however, is pain that lasts beyond the normal healing time of body tissues and is **not** a good indicator of on-going damage, even though it may feel like it. In the past we used to think that persistent pain resulted from an injury that had not healed, or from some a structural issue within our bodies. However, most of the time this is not accurate. Instead, we now know that **persistent pain is less to do with structural changes in our bodies and more to do with changes in our nervous system.** It's like the volume knob on our pain system has been left turned up like a radio stuck on 'loud' and it can start to take over a person's life.



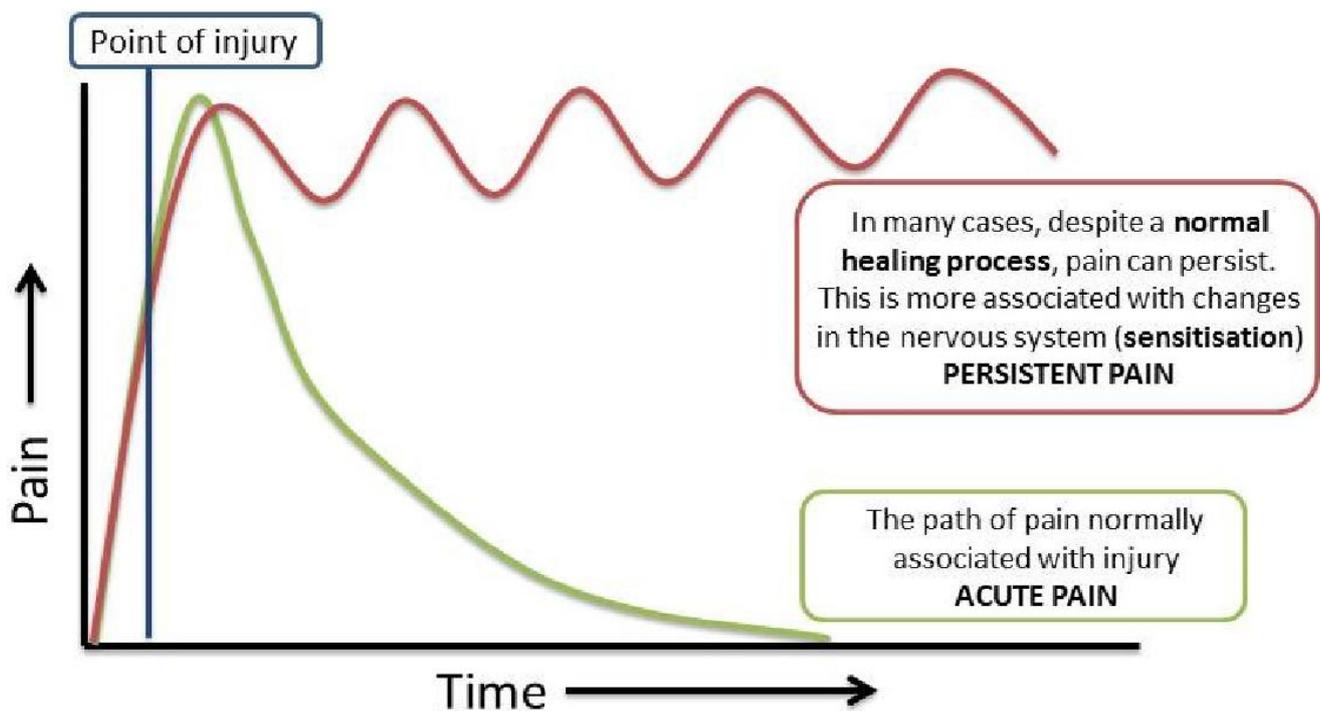
How does pain work?

In **acute pain** situations, such as following a sprained ankle, the immune system will activate inflammatory chemicals which 'wind up' the nervous system. This increases the 'danger messages' being sent to the brain in order to alert you to the problem and encourage you to take action.

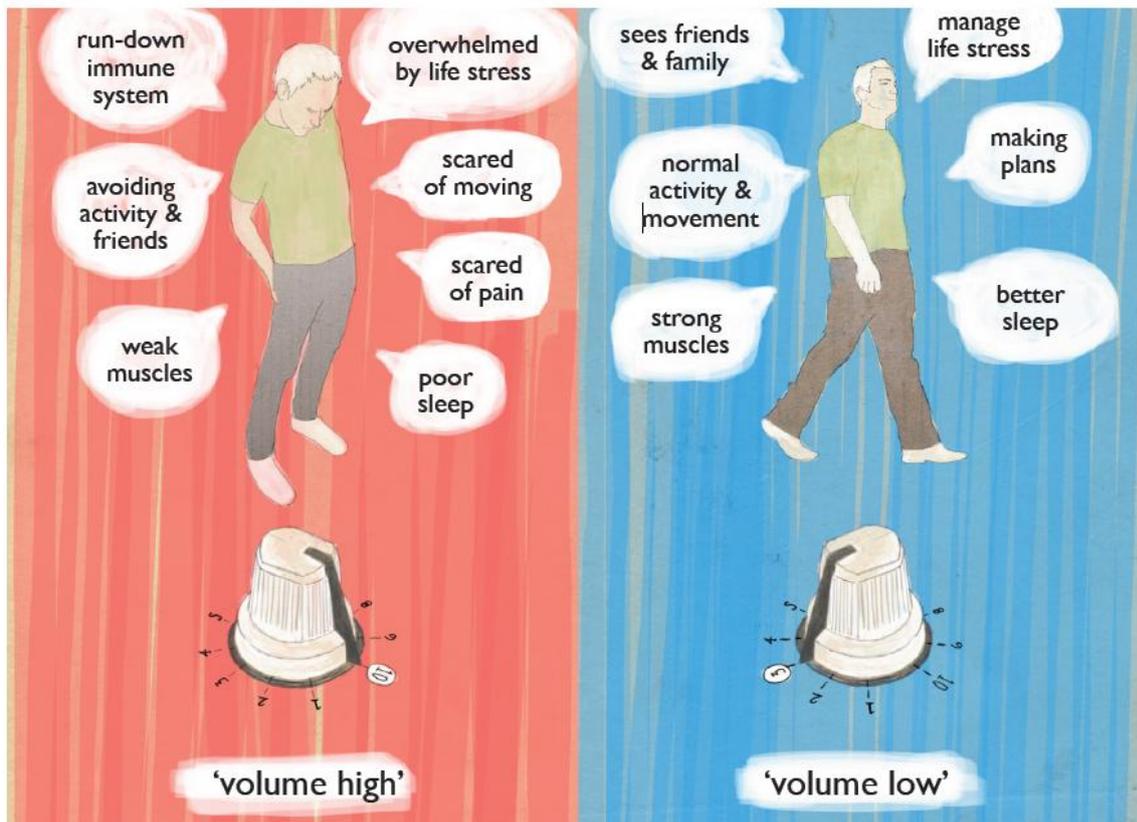
At this point the nervous system has become **sensitised** and it will remain on alert whilst the tissues undergo their healing response. Movements that would normally be pain free may now trigger a painful experience. This is normally helpful with acute pain as it makes us change our behaviour e.g. moving a broken arm wouldn't allow it to heal very well.

In most instances as the body heals, the nervous system gradually winds down and the sensitivity returns to the pre-injury level. However, in many people pain persists beyond the body's natural healing times and this is normally due to changes in the nervous system.

The nervous system remains **sensitised**.



Persistent pain is complex and although we don't know exactly why some people's pain persists, there are lots of factors associated with maintaining. These will be different for different people but some of the general areas are outlined below:



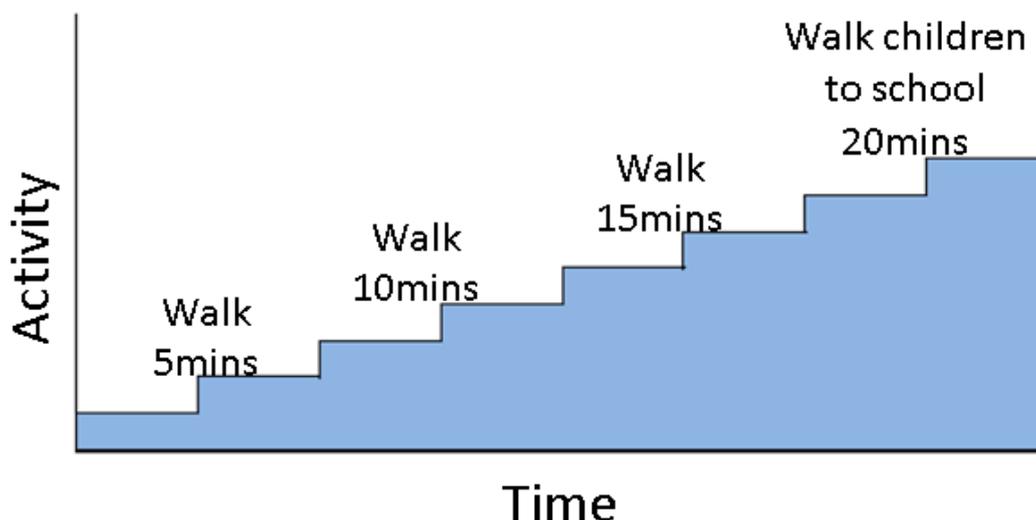
Coping strategies

Education about persistent pain is your first coping strategy so take heart that you are already helping yourself. You can continue to learn more by researching the following resources:

- YouTube: *Chronic Pain – Tame the Beast*
- YouTube: *Professor Lorimer Mosely – The Pain revolution*
- YouTube: *Understanding Pain in Less than 5 minutes*
- Ted Talks: *Why things hurt*
- Website: *Institute for chronic pain* www.instituteforchronicpain.org
- Website: *Live Well with Pain* <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>

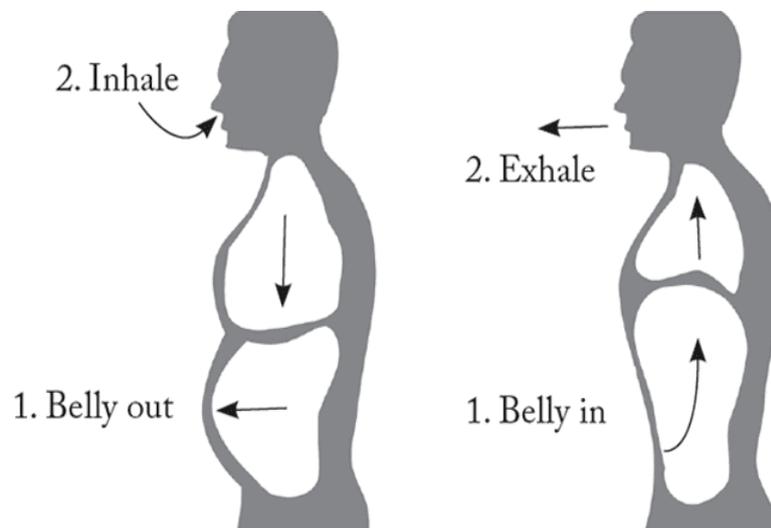
Many of the resources can be found on our YouTube channel: bit.ly/2Cx0Gb7

Graded activity for some people is a way of trying to reverse the physical decline and gradually restore function. It is a series of achievable goals which you can accomplish which works best when you align it to something really important to you.



Relaxation strategies can be helpful to unwind a sensitised nervous system.

Below is a representation of a diaphragmatic breathing exercise:



Guided self-help in the form of literature and/or online are available for relatively little investment. These include:

- YouTube Channel: **Chelsea Pain Clinic**
- *Overcoming Chronic Pain (2005)* by Dr Frances Cole and colleagues
- *Mindfulness Solution to Pain (2009)* by Dr Jackie Gardner-Nix
- *Practical Pain Management (2014)* by Dr Susan Childs and Dr Keren Fisher
- *Curable* Smart Phone App – available from www.curablehealth.com
- *Pain Concern*: <https://painconcern.org.uk/>
- *Live Well with Pain*: <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>

What happens next?

You may choose to self-manage using this session as a starting point. Good luck with your journey.

If you think you need some support to manage your pain differently then you might wish to sign up for our assessment. This involves coming to the pain clinic for another appointment where we will have a chance to get to know you and your pain thoroughly. We will then think with you about which one of our interventions might be most helpful.

If you decide this approach is not for you, then that's ok too. Let us know before you leave today and we will discharge you.

Key messages from today

- All pain is an experience created by the nervous system but acute pain and persistent pain are not the same.
- Persistent pain is complex and is more associated with increased sensitivity in the nervous system rather than structural changes in the body.
- Persistent pain is influenced by activity (doing too much or too little), poor sleep, feeling overwhelmed, experiencing low mood and stress.
- Changes in how you think about and manage your life with pain can improve your quality of life and coping with pain.

Thank you for coming today! Please consider if this approach may help you to manage your pain and email us to opt-in within two weeks of you attending this session: Chelwest.PainManagement.TherapyTeam@nhs.net